

NAME: Ishida, Shinkuro DATE OF BIRTH: 11/20/1887 PLACE OF BIRTH: Hiroshima  
 Age: 86 Sex: M Marital Status: W Education: Elementary School

PRE-WAR: Hawaii - 1905, Mainland - 1906  
 Date of arrival in U.S.: 1906 Age: 18 M.S. S Port of entry: Oakland  
 Occupation/s: 1. Railroad Worker (WY) 2. Boarding House worker. Cabin Steward (SEA) \*\*  
 Place of residence: 1. Hawaii (1 yr) 2. Cheyenne, Wyoming 3. Denver, Co. (2 yr)  
 Religious affiliation: Buddhist 4. Seattle, Wa. (2 yr) 5. Sacramento, Ca.  
 Community organizations/activities: 6. Stockton, Ca. 7. Lodi, Ca.  
 EVACUATION: \*\*4. Waiter (SEA) 5. Barber (SAC) 6. Farmer (STOC) 7. Restaurant owner (ST)  
8. Vineyard Worker (LODI) 9. Fish Store (LODI)

Name of assembly center: \*\*\*  
 Name of relocation center: Rohwer, Arkansas  
 Dispensation of property: Own home/Rented Names of bank/s: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jobs held in camp: 1. Shoe Repairing 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jobs held outside of camp: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Left camp to go to: Lodi, California

POST-WAR: \*\*\*Santa Fe, New Mexico (Internment Camp)

Date returned to West Coast: 1945

Address/es: 1. Lodi, California 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Religious affiliation: Buddhist

Activities: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe Date: 7/10/74 Place: Lodi, California

Translator: Kiyoshi Ishikawa

Name: Shinkuro Ishida

Age: 86 years old

Birthdate: Nov. 20, 1888 <sup>47</sup>

Birthplace: Hiroshima Ken

The Year he came to the US: 1906

At what age did he come to the US: 16

Major Occupation: Farming, business, and others

Relocation Camp: Rohwer, Arkansas

Interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe

Date of Interview: July, 10, 1974

Place of Interview: Sacramento, Calif.

Translator: Gwynith Ishihara

Typist: Joan Arao

MR. SHINKURO ISHIDA

Q: Where were you born?

A: In Hiroshima, Japan

Q: How old are you or when were you born?

A: November 20, <sup>1881</sup> ~~1870~~ --the 20th year of Meiji. So I'm 86 years old. And at 86 there is not too much I can do.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: I have four boys. I did have ten children altogether, but two of them died.

Q: Where does your daughter Ruth rank?

A: She is the second oldest.

Q: What did your father do in Japan?

A: He was a farmer.

Q: What kind of person was he? Was he very strict?

A: No, he was not too strict with us. He was a very good man and also a good father. Besides being a farmer, he spent a lot of time in the military forces. He lived to the age of seventy-two.

Q: How about your mother?

A: She died at a fairly early age, when she was in her sixties. I don't remember exactly when.

Q: Do you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes. There were five of us, three brothers and two sisters. I'm the eldest.

Q: What do you consider was the most important thing in life to your father?

A: I'm not sure, but I guess it would have been his work, farming.

Q: Did he talk a lot with you about different things?

A: That is so long ago, when I was a child, so I'm afraid I can't recall anything in particular.

Q: Were there a lot of books in your home?

A: We only had a few.

Q: Do you ever remember reading about Ninomiya Sontoku?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: What was your religion? Were you Buddhists?

A: Yes, we were.

Q: Were you shinshu?

A: No, we belonged to the Zenshu.

Q: Was the place you lived in a town or village?

A: Village--Jinseki gun, Nagato village.

Q: Do you remember any special things that happened in your village?

A: No, I don't.

Q: How far did you go in school?

A: I did not graduate from elementary school.

Q: What sort of things did you learn in school?

A: When we were children, it was mostly reading that we learned. We went through five or six readers. We also had physical education.

Q: Do you remember any of your school teachers?

A: I remember the first one we had.

Q: What was he like?

A: His name was Mr. Tange Gunpei. He was a very fine teacher. He very rarely got angry.

Q: Were you ever scolded?

A: Not very often. Once in a while, we'd fool around on the

way to school and were late, then he would be annoyed and reprimand us.

The Sino-Japanese War was on about the time we were going to school. That was in the 7th and 8th year of Meiji; and the Russian Japanese war was just ending when I arrived in America.

Q: What do you remember of the Sino Japanese War?

A: We used to go from school to the village and see the men off who were going to fight for their country.

I: There must have been a lot of casualties.

A: Actually during the Sino Japanese War, there were not too many. One thing I remember clearly about the Sino Japanese War was that one man from our village returned home with a medal of honor. He was so elated and excited, he decided to celebrate the occasion. He stopped in town to have a few drinks. But sad to say, he ended up in a fight with someone and his medal was taken away from him.

Q: You mean it was stolen?

A: No a government official who saw him drunk and fighting just took the medal from him. If you get this important medal, you are paid or rewarded a certain sum of money from the government every year. But since the medal was reclaimed, the man was deprived of both medal and money !

Q: Did you have history as one of your subjects in school?

A: No, we didn't have it then.

Q: How about lessons in morals?

A: Yes, we had morals or ethics as a subject and "Tokuhon" which consisted of learning not only how to read the Chinese and Japanese characters, but also how to write them.

Q: Did you ever go to Okinawa when you were young?

A: No.

Q: Did you hear anything about Christianity in those days?

A: No, we never heard anything about it.

Q: How about the Russian Japanese War. Do you have any recollections of it?

A: The only thing I recall is going to the village to bid farewell to the men who were leaving for war.

Q: For what reason did you come to the United States?

A: I went to Hawaii first for one year before coming to America.

Q: But why did you want to come to the States?

A: I did not have much money when I boarded the boat to come to America. And when we got here, we could not land in San Francisco because the city had been destroyed by fire, so we landed in Oakland.

Q: You came over in 1906 then?

A: Yes.

Q: Since you were the eldest son, wasn't it difficult for you to get your parents permission to leave home?

A: No, we were free. It seems to me that there was some particular reason for my going to Hawaii. There were folk in that country who were looking for people to go over there to work.

Q: Didn't you want to stay in your own country?

A: I was young then and enthusiastic when it came to new adventures.

Q: How old were you?

A: About 17 years old.

Q: What sort of country did you imagine America to be before you came here?

A: I wanted to see the huge continent. Boat fares were very cheap; and the ship "Manchuria," which I travelled on was a pretty big vessel.

Q: What kind of people were on the ship?

A: The ships crew were all Chinese and the majority of the passengers were as well.

Q: What do you remember about your arrival in Hawaii?

A: My aim was to find work and make money. However, since I only stayed over there one year, I was unable to do very much.

Q: Where did you work, in the sugar cane fields?

A: Yes, we had to keep the plants watered and cut them down when they were ready for harvest.

Q: I guess the pay was not too good was it?

A: We got \$1.65 for a whole days work. They gave us a lunch to take to the fields, but they deducted board and room.

Q: Was it hard work?

A: Yes, very hard. We'd start at 8:00 in the morning and finish at 5:00 in the evening. Once we had a strike which lasted a week. This was the only unusual incident. I believe two Japanese who were leaders were killed.

Q: What thought went through your mind when you arrived in Oakland?

A: I wanted to find some kind of employment immediately. There were Japanese who were looking for men to work on the

railroad. until they were ready for me, I slept in a box car for a couple of days; then I joined the working crew. My co-workers told me it would not take long till we arrived at our destination, but actually it was a three day journey. we finally arrived in Cheyenne, Wyoming. we were there for a few days, then I was assigned to another railroad section. The only problem with the railroad was it did not pay much. However, I heard that there was a great need for people to work in the sugar beet fields in Colorado; so I decided to try working in the fields again, but I found the work to strenuous and quit after a month of hard work. I moved to Denver and found a job in a boarding house making beds etc. for a year.

Q: Was this a Japanese owned boarding house?

A: Yes. I stayed in Denver for approximately two years. There weren't too many Japanese in Denver then. There was a Japanese restaurant, barber and the boarding house. From Denver, I went up to Seattle in 1908. In 1909 there was a state fair. My stay in Seattle was also about two years. Up in Seattle they were looking for men to work on ships as cabin stewards. This sounded interesting so I decided to try it. The cook on the ship I was assigned to was a Japanese so I was happy to have someone I could converse with. The ship left Seattle and headed first for New Mexico. We were not loaded with anything when we left New Mexico, but in Newcastle, Australia, our schooner was loaded with coal which we took back to Portland, Oregon.

After this trip, I returned to Seattle. Now that I had money to spend again, I did some travelling around to various places.

Q: How old were you now?

A: I was about nineteen and in Japan it was the age young men were drafted in the army. Since I was not at home to be drafted, my father had to pay a fine!

Australia was a wonderful place. There were ever so many great big beautiful chestnut trees.

Q: What else did you like about Australia?

A: I thought it was a very lovely place.

Q: Didn't you think about living over there?

A: At that time my home was on the ship, but I wanted to come back to America.

Q: Did you have any relatives or friends who came from the same district as yourself in Japan?

A: No relatives, but I met a few people in Tacoma, Washington who came from the same area.

Q: What did you think of the Caucasians in those days? Did they ridicule or persecute you in any way?

A: No, they didn't.

When I think back now of working on the ship without knowing a word of English, it seems like a miracle! Of course the cook was Japanese, so I was able to talk with him.

Q: Did you have any difficult experiences then?

A: I can't remember off hand.

Q: What leisure activities did you participate in?

A: Pool was very very popular and I spent a lot of time playing it.

One thing nice about living in Seattle was that meals at certain restaurants were very cheap. You could get a good meal of rice with a few side dishes of vegetables,-- fish, meat etc. for as little as ten or fifteen cents. There were only two or three places where you could get this reasonable meal which was known as the "Ten cent Special." Young people like to fool around and that is what I and my friends did in our spare time. Even though I could not speak much English, I took a job in a bar. Three other Japanese were employed here, and the pay was excellent. On good days, I made \$16.00. I thought this was wonderful.

Q: Was the owner a Japanese?

A: No, it was owned by a Caucasian. My job was as a waiter mainly, but I also washed dishes and helped in any cleaning up that was to be done. The salary I earned didn't last too long as I used it on pool, food and fooling around with women.

Q: Did you encounter any painful experiences?

A: No I didn't. Perhaps this was because I was still young and single!

One desire I had was to go to Alaska. But you could not go unless you had at least \$50.00. I saved up the money to go but someone stole it.

Q: How long did you work at the bar?

A: For a year.

Q: Was the stolen money your earnings from working in the bar?

A: Yes. Besides my monthly pay check, we got tips from our customers--ten to fifteen cents per customer, and this soon mounted up to a nice sum; but I am sad to say one Japanese worker tricked me and I lost my \$50.00. This was the best place I worked at.

Q: Did you leave the bar because of the unfortunate experience?

A: No, I quit because I thought of becoming a barber, but this did not work out.

Q: What did you do after you quit the bar?

A: I moved from Seattle to California--to Sacramento. This is where I thought of trying out working in a barber shop, but I did not succeed. By this time I was broke so I came down to Stockton and worked in the potato fields. I did this one whole winter. Then I moved to Stockton and continued in the potato business for a while. Once again I was able to make some money. This time I bought a pool room with what I had saved. It was not long before I sold the pool room and bought a restaurant instead. Having had to hire cooks and helpers, it was quite an undertaking. About this time my father figured it was time for me to marry, so he sent a girl to me from Japan.

Q: What year was that?

A: That was in 1912.

Q: Did they send you a picture of your bride?

A: Yes--it was what we call a "picture bride or picture wedding" arrangement.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was twenty-seven.

Q: And how old was your wife?

A: She was three years younger than I, so that would make her twenty-four.

Q: Were you thinking of getting married then anyway?

A: No, I had no intentions of getting married so soon, but there was nothing I could do but get married since they had gone to all the trouble of sending me a bride from Japan! I went to Angel Island in San Francisco with her photo to meet her.

Q: Were you able to recognize her immediately?

A: Yes. The girls had to show the \$50.00 they had brought to get married with before they were allowed to go ashore. I had to borrow \$75.00 from a farmer I had worked for. With this, I was able to get my bride through all the red-tape and bring her to Stockton.

As I mentioned before, I came to this country to make money, but it seemed like I was always spending more than I made! Potato farmers made pretty good money. Farmers got a very good price for thier potatoes. They sold at \$5.00 per sack. A plentiful harvest brought in one-hundred and twenty sacks of potatoes per acre.

Q: Were you working on the potato farm when your wife arrived from Japan?

A: Yes. And after she came, we worked at the same place for two years. There was a "share crop," arrangement and this was great because we could borrow all the necessary equipment.

Q: Did you live in an apartment after you were married?

A: No, we gave up farming and moved to Stockton City and started a restaurant. However, it seemed like we could never save money. We spent a lot on food and pleasures!

Q: Even after your wife arrived?

A: Yes, I was still so young then!

Q: How long after your wife came, did you start a family?

A: The year she came, our first child Bradd was born. Ruth was our second child.

Q: What else did you do when you moved into town?

A: As I mentioned, we started a restaurant and we also tried running a junk store. This was interesting too. Even though we were inexperienced, we were daring enough to try different things. The second-hand store did very well until we began taking in brand new goods to sell. When we started to do this, we found ourselves getting into debt and finally we were bankrupt! Our debts mounted to seven thousand dollars. If we had just kept to selling second-hand articles, we would have done well in the business.

Q: What did you do when you found you were bankrupt?

A: We moved to Lodi. We came up here in 1929.

Q: Wasn't that the year of the great depression?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do in Lodi?

A: First I worked in the vineyards for two years, then I had a fish store for eleven years.

Q: Did you have a hard time during the depression?

A: No, we didn't.

Q: Were you working in the vineyards or the fish store during the depression?

A: I was working in the fish business.

Q: What kinds of fish did you sell?

A: Many different kinds because they were all shipped in from San Diego and Monterey. We had sardines, king-fish, makeral, horse-makeral, pike, yellow tail, squid, octopus etc. Squid was one cent a pound! Sardines were cheap too.

Q: Were you successful in the fish business?

A: Yes, it was pretty good.

Q: Were your customers mostly Japanese?

A: No, a lot of Caucasians came to buy our fish too.

Q: You had the fish store until the war started, didn't you?

A: Yes.

Q: What was your reaction when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

A: I wondered what might happen as a result of the Japanese attack.

Q: Did you think there would be a chance that you might be interned?

A: We were very much afraid that something might happen to us. But when we went to San Diego to get our fish one time, we knew that trouble was brewing in the air! We were afraid that we might even get shot.

Q: When did the officials come after you?

A: Two F.B.I. officials came and told us to change our clothes because we would have to go with them. We were not told where we were being taken to. We were put on a

train but since the windows were all well covered, we had no idea where we were headed.

Q: What happened to your store?

A: My wife and children looked after it.

Q: How old was Ruth at that time?

A: I don't remember, but she was going to high school so she was in her teens.

Q: How long did you have to stay in the Santa Fe prison?

A: About one year.

Q: Did they have court hearings etc?

A: Yes. They asked us all kinds seemingly trivial questions.

Q: What happened after the year was up?

A: They took me to the internment camp where my wife was.

Q: Where was that?

A: Arkansas, a place called Lowe. ~~ROHWER~~?

Q: How did you spend your days in the jail at Santa Fe?

A: There was no work. We just spent our time in leisure.

But we all had to take our turn at cooking. I was surprised that there was so much good food to eat including plenty of meat.

Q: Did you ever wonder if they might want to harm you?

A: We did think they might want to get rid of us: There was a huge double fence around the prison. It must have cost a lot of money to put that up.

Q: Did you have six children by this time?

A: Yes; and Ruth was married when we still had the fish store.

Q: About how long were you in camp Lowe?

A: Two years.

Q: From Lodi did you return to Lodi?

A: Yes, we did. We had our home there and we had rented it out while we were away.

Q: Were you able to go to your home right away?

A: No. There were some Caucasians living there so we had to wait until they moved out. We stayed with some friends until the tenants moved out.

Q: Who of your family were with you?

A: Just my wife and I. Our children were all grown up and married or working in other places.

Q: How long did you have to wait to get in your own home?

A: About six months. It seemed like a long time.

Q: What about all your belongings?

A: We had them stored in our house.

Q: Did you get all your things back?

A: Yes we did. There was nothing stolen or lost. The Caucasian family looked after everything very well and kept the place spotlessly clean. The only problem was, we could not get them to move; it was difficult for them to find another place.

Q: What did you do after you came back from camp?

A: There was nothing much I could do, but work on a ranch. Actually I still had lots of energy and was game to try my hand at most anything.

Q: Didn't you continue the fish store?

A: No. My son took over that business.

Q: When did you retire?

A: It's quite a long time ago now.

Q: How about your wife?

A: Soon after we returned from camp, she passed away.

It is twenty years since she died.

Q: Then that really was right after you got home from camp wasn't it?

A: Yes.

Q: Did she have cancer or some other disease?

A: She had some sort of internal disease.

Q: Do you belong to some Japanese group or club?

A: Yes, ever since we came to Lodi we have. Two of my children used to go and learn "kendo"--Japanese fencing; and we always belonged to the clubs they had in the Buddhist church.

Q: Were you ever president of any group?

A: No, never.

Q: Why were you arrested by the F.B.I. officials then?

Wasn't it mostly leaders of such groups who were arrested?

A: It was because I had connections with the fencing club.

Anyone with such links were considered criminals.

Even to this day I have fencing club conferences at my place.

Q: Did you do any fencing?

A: No I didn't, but two of my boys learned this Japanese art.

Q: How many sons do you have?

A: Four.

Q: And how many daughters?

A: Three.

Q: Were the Caucasians in Lodi kind to you and your family?

A: Yes, very kind. Even now they are very considerate and we have never been rejected or ostracised by them.

Q: When I asked you before, you said the depression did not affect you much; but wasn't there a neighbour of yours who was killed?

A: Yes. However I do not know what the reason was for that act of murder, but whoever committed the crime must have been out of his mind! We Japanese were called "Japs" in the prewar and post war days, but you do not hear that said anymore.

Q: Did you do any work when you were in internment?

A: Yes, I did a lot of shoe repairs. There were plenty of shoes to repair with all the Japanese folk that were in camp.

Q: What did your wife do?

A: She didn't have a job. There was not much for her to do except to eat, sleep and visit with her friends.

Q: Did you have a lot of property and savings?

A: I didn't have any savings in the bank, but I did own the fish market. But as I mentioned previously, my eldest son took over the fish business.

Q: When there was the question and problem of which country you should be loyal to, what did you do?

A: I thought I would like to become an American citizen so I worked hard to attain it.

Q: When did you become a citizen of this country?

A: I don't remember exactly what year, but I do know I am a citizen.

Q: Was it after the war?

A: Yes. It was quite easy. I went to San Francisco to obtain it, and they granted it after asking only a few

easy questions.

Q: Getting back to the matter of loyalty, wasn't it a big problem when you were all in camp?

A: No, not at all.

Q: What did you think of the nisei having to be drafted?

A: Two of my children went into the American armed forces. They were drafted.

Q: Were they drafted from camp?

A: No, they were in the forces before war was declared. My son Tom who lives near the tenth street market was in the armed forces.

Q: You were not exactly agreeable to the Nisei having to be drafted were you?

A: I wasn't for it nor against it. This was a government order and a highly sensitive situation, so no one dared show opposition to it. There were those who showed their feelings of indignation, but I thought it was quite natural for the American government to want to draft anyone who was a citizen!

Q: Did you have any hobbies like "Go," (Japanese chess) to occupy your spare time in camp?

A: No I didn't. On my day off from shoe repairing, I just ate and slept!

Q: Didn't you go to any hostels when you came back from camp?

A: No because we had our own home. We stayed with our Japanese friends until the tenants moved out.

Q: Do you remember when you came back to Lodi? Was it after the war was over?

A: Yes. They just told us the camps were to be closed down and we would have to move out. So we packed all our belongings and they kindly shipped all our baggage free of charge no matter how far we had to go. We were so thankful for this kind gesture.

Q: What was the attitude of the Caucasians towards the Japanese after the war?

A: It was very good.

Q: Did you ever have the desire of returning to Japan?

A: No. I never really wanted to go back.

Q: When did you buy your house in Lodi?

A: In 1929.

Q: Were you able to purchase your house without any problems?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you own any land as well?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: What advice would you like to give the young third and fourth generation Japanese?

A: There is nothing much I can say to them. I don't think it is wise for an old man like me to tell them what they should do.

Q: Do you think it is good to be conscious of the fact that we are Japanese or do you think the third and fourth generations should not worry about this since they were born here and are naturally American citizens?

A: The second generation Japanese are now in their fifties

and sixties and most of their children cannot speak Japanese.

Q: Do you think they should learn to spea Japanese?

A: Yes, I think they should.

Q: You can speak English can't you?

A: No, I can't.

Q: The Sansei are very interested right now in learning all they can about the traditions and customs of Japan. What do you think about this?

A: I think that's great. I really hope they can study the language too. Many of the Nisei who could speak Japanese were able to get good jobs in the government and also in banks etc.

Q: You have spent a life full of many interesting experiences therefore if you were to pass on some words of wisdom for the young people, what would you say?

A: I don't know what to say! But if we could converse with them, it would be wonderful. I think it is very good to be able to use another language. You have a better chance to succeed.

Q: The Sansei have not had to go through any painful experiences like the older folk. Do you think it is better to have or not to have some hard times?

A: It is never pleasant to have to go through difficult experiences. The Nisei who live in Lodi own a lot of very good land. But the Sansei are busy studying now and I don't suppose any of them will want to take up farming as a career. I'm sure they will all want to get good jobs after they graduate from college.

Q: Have you ever been back to Japan?

A: Yes, I have been over twice to visit. The last time I went was six years ago.

Q: What were your impressions of Japan?

A: As a Japanese, I think it's a great country, but there are too many people over there. It is so crowded and hard to get around especially in big cities like Tokyo. They have many beautiful buildings like the New Otani Hotel. They must have money in order to be able to put up such gorgeous structures.

Q: Do you remember any particular thing your parents tried to teach you?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Was your father a very religious man?

A: Yes, I guess he may have been although I cannot recall religion being made much of in our home.

Q: Don't you have any memories of your grandmother clapping her hands before the family alter?

A: No. I never saw anything like that.

Q: However, isn't it true that there are many Buddhists in Hiroshima?

A: Yes, it's quite strong down there. I think older people cling to the traditional religion, but apparently the young people are not interested in it. Last time I went over to Japan it seemed like there were not too many new temples and shrines.

Q: There are quite a few Buddhists in Lodi, aren't there?

A: Yes. And there is a Buddhist Church there too, a beautiful one. It seems that Buddhism is much more popular here

than in Japan.

Q: Yes. that's so. What do you suppose is the reason for this?

A: The new Buddhist believers who came over to America were very enthusiastic, so perhaps this accounts for its success in this country.

Q: But it is not so popular in Japan now, is it?

A: It doesn't seem to be. I think Buddhism will eventually die out in Japan. When I left Japan many years ago, it was flourishing and I guess there are still many faithful believers and followers; but it is not thriving like it used to.